Beyond Nominal

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Beyond Nominal

by barcharonte

Summary

What better way to spend a honeymoon than to murder, manipulate, and make love? This is a study of tying off some loose ends and making the most of their time in Baltimore, featuring Will Graham's glasses and the unfortunate lack of library ladders.

Notes

This is dedicated to my darling friend Frogo. I miss you and I feel your absence keenly. I hope you are hydrated and doing well.

See the end of the work for more notes

Deep down, Will had thought being back in Baltimore would be a test to their relationship. When even a visit to the tailor could trigger a regressive episode, physically being back in a place where Will was drugged and subjected to psychic driving by his now husband, in all honesty, should have been challenging.

He was wrong. It was their first hour back on Baltimore soil, and so far it was proving to be quite helpful to overcome past trauma.

"*Will*," Hannibal moaned, his high voice ringing in the dining room of his Baltimore house. He had not sold it off, even went so far as to have it cleaned and maintained once a week, and Will was thoroughly enjoying the fact.

"I told you to shut it," he growled, his thrust forceful as he pushed Hannibal's face down to the floor, making him bend more at the waist. He had not even had the chance to change out of the suit he wore on the flight, and Will grasped the jacket's back in his hand, using the grip to drive in. Even though his memories were disjointed, he knew they were at the exact spot he begged Hannibal to be honest with him, half his brain on fire and believing Garrett Jacob Hobbs to be seated at the head of the table.

Hannibal was too far gone to keep quiet, though. While he lost his words soon enough, he kept moaning. Will doubled his efforts, and with nails digging deep into Hannibal's hips, he kept thrusting hard. His own pants were only unfastened enough for his cock to be out, the rattling of his belt and the rustling of their clothes loud along with the slapping sounds their frantic coupling made. In a bid to further his point, Will placed one feet, dirty shoe and all, right next to Hannibal's face, and the change in angles brought a hitch to Hannibal's breath, followed closely by an approving sob.

"Will," sounded again, a desperate murmur this time. This had been going on for some time now and Hannibal was ready to be touched, to come as Will stroked him to completion as he usually did.

Usually.

"No," he said, holding him down by the nape when he tried to straighten.

"Will, *please*," Hannibal said, voice breaking as he reached for himself. With a snarl, Will roughly pulled the offending arm back to keep it against Hannibal's waist.

"I said no," he said, emphasizing each word with harsh thrusts that hit Hannibal's prostate unerringly. "Come like this, or not at all. I…uhh!" Will was momentarily disarmed when Hannibal squeezed around him, deliberate. "I don't care," he finished.

Like this, beneath Will, a crumpled mess, his cheek flattened against the floor and eyes rolled back as he was restrained. This was Hannibal at his most honest; with himself and with Will. Nobody ever saw him like this; mouth agape, hair in disarray, bent in an unforgiving angle and letting himself be tortured by a sharp, cruel pleasure at the hands of another.

The sounds Will made now could hardly be called human: He was sweaty, tired from the flight but reinvigorated by this opportunity to see Hannibal unravel at his feet. Literally, in this case. He twisted the wrist in his hand, only mildly careful not to leave damage, and pulled Hannibal up until he could feel the vibrations from Will's growls against his neck. The heat of his skin under all those layers between them, the tightness of him surrounding his cock, the unabashed abandon with which he gave voice to his pleasure, the abandon in his surrender, it was all getting to Will. Not actually wanting this to be over without Hannibal coming, he did what he knew would be the last push for him.

Yanking at Hannibal's tie and shirt, and sending the first couple of buttons flying in his haste, Will bit Hannibal right where his neck met his shoulder, until he could taste the blood on his tongue. It was the exact right amount of brutality too: Hannibal, breath fucked out of him and oh so silent, convulsed violently around Will as he came untouched. Will followed, each twitch of his cock inside Hannibal reciprocated with a quiver of his muscles around him.

He released Hannibal and threw himself to the wall, resting his back there, trying to gather his breath. He had wanted to watch Hannibal do the same, but the opportunity was denied to him when Hannibal, in all his ravished glory, straddled him in a blink and proceeded to lick Will's teeth free of his own blood. If he had not felt it so intimately, Will would have thought he had not come.

"Easy," he murmured in between kisses, worn out, a hand cradling the back of Hannibal's head gently.

Hannibal was murmuring against his lips in Lithuanian, slurring words occasionally mixed with endearments Will recognized. He was showered with affection, his eyelids kissed, his scalp scented, his hips squeezed between Hannibal's strong thighs, hands roaming wherever they could reach. Will felt an undercurrent of pride at himself for breaking through Hannibal's walls so effectively, and for finding himself so enthusiastically awaited and welcome.

"Sorry for the suit," he said, when Hannibal rested his head on his shoulder, running his fingers over fabric where buttons resided until a few minutes ago.

Hannibal huffed out a delighted breath against his neck. "To see you like this, *mylimasis*, to have you like this, I would replace them faster than you can destroy them."

Will placed a delicate kiss right above the lazily bleeding bite. "And this? Can you heal fast enough for more of this?"

Hannibal leaned back to take Will's face in both his hands, thumb caressing his cheekbones. "I shall certainly try," he murmured. "Now, may I interest you in a shower, followed by a visit to the kitchen?"

Will took in the hooded, seductive eyes. "To cook, right?" He asked, knowing that no matter how much they wanted each other, it was too soon to go at it again.

"Certainly," Hannibal replied, and with only a slight hiss, he got up and fastened his trousers. "At some point," he added, and inclined his head towards the hall in a silent invitation to join

him in the bathroom.

Will did so with a laugh.

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Hannibal tried to keep his attention only on the simplest meal he ever prepared for them; spaghetti on Will's insistence, with chorizo and pangritata on Hannibal's. Will, clad only in one of Hannibal's bathrobes, perched on the edge of the counter and watched him cook. Hannibal himself was dressed in a similar fashion due to the impossibility of finding it in himself to care about clothing at the moment. He kept stealing gazes at Will's leg, the material having slid off of it due to his position and Will, likewise, not caring enough about it to cover himself. He looked delectable.

"I cannot believe you kept the place," Will said as he took in the spotless counters and the fridge he saw was stacked upon Hannibal's directives before they got on their five-hour flight. Hannibal had many safe houses stashed away in all corners of the world, but only this one and the one in Paris were in his own name. "Did you want to come back, at some point?"

"Baltimore will always hold a special place in my heart," Hannibal said, draining the pasta and running only a bit of cold water over it.

Will thought about it. "Because of the Ripper?"

"Because of you, *and* the Ripper." Hannibal said, tipping the pasta into the pan with the other ingredients, seasoning it with chili. "We met here."

"We met in Jack's office."

"And unfortunately for me, it was not on the market." Hannibal watched Will chuckle, his limbs lax and countenance open.

"What about *your* office?" Will asked, eyes not leaving Hannibal's hands as they swiftly prepared their plates. "I would have liked a chance to be there again, with you."

Hannibal paused as he was carrying their plates to the island, opting to eat there as a nod to the table etiquette they'd been breaking this evening. "As you were, just now?" The possibilities were fascinating in their obscene nature.

"Maybe," Will said, going for coyness but betraying himself with the curl of his lips that he could not contain. He opened a few drawers until he found the silverware, and brought them to the island where Hannibal placed their plates. "I guess we'll never know."

"I sometimes had sessions in my study, here," Hannibal saw fit to remind as they took their seats. "Under exceptional circumstances, of course."

Will nodded, mock serious. "Ah yes, of course. Rest assured that your professional integrity remains unquestioned, Doctor."

They ate in silence until the sound of Will's phone came from the foyer, where he left it in his messenger bag. Neither moved to retrieve it.

"You didn't call Jack to let him know we arrived, did you?" Will asked.

"No, I thought you would call him yourself."

The fact of the matter was that, while they had actually been otherwise preoccupied with far more pleasurable endeavours, Will had also been unwilling to start the FBI chapter of their Baltimore visit just yet. It was one thing to agree to be back on the field, however temporary it might be, but it was an entirely another thing to jump head-first into the mind of a bloodthirsty animalistic serial killer.

The ringing stopped. It was only when it rang again that Will got up to retrieve it.

"Hello, Jack."

"Will, finally. You arrived?"

"Yeah, we are settling in," Will said. "Is something wrong?"

"No," Jack's sounded distracted, the sound of shuffling papers was very pronounced. "You coming by?"

"Tomorrow, yeah," Will glanced at the half-circle glass panel above the front door. It was already dark. "During *business hours*," he added with emphasis, to drive the point in. He was not about to let Jack walk all over him again.

"Killers don't have business hours, so neither do we." Jack was irritated, so he was talking slowly with each word clearly pronounced. "And I want you to take a look at the crime scene photos."

"You can send them to me if you want, but I can't promise I'll look before tomorrow." That was a lie, plain and simple, because unwilling though he may be to dive right back in, he was also curious.

"He may kill again. People are dying, Will."

"People die all the time, Jack," Will said, finding that setting his boundaries with Jack was not as hard as he imagined it would be. He believed it wholly when he said, "I have accepted that the responsibility lies wholly with their killers."

This conviction may or may not have something to do with Will's status as Hannibal's partner in all things murder and cannibalism, but he was not about to partake that bit of information. He heard the intake of breath that previously would have been followed by a rebuttal, but was now held for a few grudging seconds and then released with a sigh.

"Tomorrow, my office, 8 a.m. and not a moment later," Jack said instead.

“Good night, Jack.” Will hung up after a noncommittal grunt. He brought the phone with him to the kitchen and, sure enough, it pinged with an e-mail from Jack, containing a zip file of what must be the crime scene pictures.

“Was that Jack?” Hannibal asked. It was a redundant question. Will opened the file and tapped on the first picture.

“I’ve had dogs with worse hearing than yours, you know it was Jack,” he murmured, already half-immersed in the crime scene. “He expects us at 8 in the morning.”

“And yet,” Hannibal said, appearing right behind Will and looking over his shoulder at the picture of the tattered remains of a truck driver. “It feels as though he’s already here with us.”

Will swiped to the next picture, then the next and the next, until he found the scene with the couple. “From what Jack told us, this is done by an extinct cave bear skull. The only way that can be used is through a construction. An armour, of sorts, housing a man.”

“Hmm,” Hannibal wrapped both arms around Will, one hand slipping under the robe to settle over Will’s heart.

Will zoomed in, inspecting the faces. “The victims, there’s no familiarity, nothing connecting them.” A frown. “Except that they were isolated. Convenient.”

“What does that mean?” Hannibal asked, lips tracing the column of Will’s neck while gazing down at the phone.

“Prey,” Will whispered. Instead of standing before the kitchen island with his half-finished meal waiting for him, he was in the shadows of the night, watching the couple exit a loud place, happy and alive and whole. They were wrapped around each other. Oblivious. Vulnerable. His skin was itching, muscles twitching. This level of immersion, he was used to. What he wasn’t used to was the flavour; the wall of warmth behind him, the strong arms around him, the sultry voice in his ear, all tying him to his body, his mind, himself.

“He could not do as his instincts told him,” he said, and went a level deeper: His teeth ruptured skin, his claws tore through organs with ease. He could taste the prey’s rush of adrenaline on his tongue. “So I hid it. I nurtured it. I caged it. I loved it. This is me, letting myself out.”

Hannibal’s arms tightened around him, a silent urge to carry on. Oblivious to his shift from *he* to *I*, Will did so.

“I have power because I dare to take it.” He was standing before the couple and enjoying the carnage he’s wrought. He could feel bits of flesh and viscera stuck between his teeth, limbs slippery with blood that splattered on him and all around them. He felt ecstatic, his body singing while there was a peaceful hush in his head, clouding and sharpening his senses at the same time in the most peculiar way. “This is my becoming.” He shuddered when he felt Hannibal’s breath on his neck, and whispered, “This is my design.”

“My beautiful boy,” Hannibal whispered in kind, so low and soothing that it helped Will come back slowly, composing himself to their synchronized heartbeat and breath. “My darling, precious boy,” Hannibal gently turned him so he could find Will’s unfocused gaze. “How magnificent you are.”

“You know this man.” It was obvious. Once upon a time, Hannibal’s secrecy and insistence on watching Will solve a puzzle only he knew the answers to, would have been suspicious. A test, to see if Will was worthy. A game, to watch Will grasp at the answer he didn’t even know was just out of his reach. Now though, now Will knew this was neither a test nor a game; this was Hannibal creating his own opportunities to watch Will excel at what he could do best, what only he could do with mastery and magnitude and might.

This was Hannibal in worship.

“I do.” Hannibal’s lips were slightly parted, jaw slackened. His person suit was nowhere to be found, his iron grip on his expression and mannerisms were abandoned in favour of experiencing this moment in its entirety. His greedy eyes travelled all over Will’s face, hair, body, and Will let him take his fill.

“You guided him.” That sounded wrong. “No, *goaded* him. A patient from a long time ago.” He licked his lips, and watched Hannibal’s eyes zero in on it. “Do you like how far he’s come?”

“Only so far as he fuels your radiance, *mylimasis*,” Hannibal breathed.

“Good answer,” Will said before letting himself sag forward and be enveloped in Hannibal’s embrace. This, he knew, was the safest place to be in the entire world, and the only place he wanted to be at the moment. “I’m not hungry anymore.”

“Well, I am,” Hannibal murmured into his hair after a deep inhale of his scent. “So let’s go to bed.”

Will chuckled into Hannibal’s chest. “You are insatiable.”

“I resent that you imply you are any different,” was Hannibal’s dignified response as he released Will to take their plates to the sink. Will leaned against the island and watched him as he wrapped the remnants of Will’s dinner to put in the fridge.

“You are the doctor,” he said. “Tell me. Is it normal for us to be so…?”

Hannibal closed the fridge door and stood for a few seconds to watch Will as he tried to find the right word. It did not come.

“So what?”

Will shook his head and looked down. “It feels… Unnatural, I suppose, to feel this strongly. To want, this much.” He could feel Hannibal’s gaze on him like a physical thing, and the scrutiny made his cheeks heat up. “I mean, shouldn’t this,” he waved at the space between them, “have faded, at some point?”

He saw Hannibal's feet finally move, and it was back towards the sink. Hannibal let him simmer as he washed the first plate.

"Think of it this way," he said finally as he reached the second plate, and the smugness in his voice was so infuriating and endearing at the same time that Will finally looked up to watch *his spouse* wash the dishes in his bathrobe. It was a sight that, while somewhat familiar, still managed to blow his mind from time to time. Moments like these where Hannibal was carefree and playful were increasingly more frequent and Will adored them each. "If the human body were incapable of producing emotions of the intensity that you speak of, then we would not have been able to feel this way." He reached for the silverware. "But because we can, not only is it possible, it is also natural. If only few people can actually experience this, that means the rest are doing something wrong. It is against the theories of creation and evolution alike that they are not feeling the way we do. It is not that we are the outliers, Will. We are how everyone should be."

Will considered this, and decided that poking holes in that argument was simply not worth it. "I'll buy that because you sound smart and I want to devour you."

Hannibal raised an eyebrow at him over his shoulder, and leaving the dishes to dry, turned to face him. It was imperceptible to the untrained eye, but his fingers were slightly impatient as he dried his hands with a towel. Will smirked at him. "Yeah, I said what I said."

"So you did," Hannibal murmured, eyes dark and predatory, and that was how Will knew they would not be able to leave the kitchen anytime soon.

And maybe that was just fine.

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"Gentlemen!" Jack's voice boomed when they came across each other in the BAU corridor. A few heads turned to look at them, but Hannibal could not recognize any of them and it was not a surprise that they went back to their jobs a moment later. "Give me a few minutes so I can…" Jack said, lifting a file to imply he had to tend to it. Hannibal was in particularly high spirits, so he decided not to be insulted that the man who called them into his presence there did not greet them with due respect.

"Of course," he said, head inclined. "We will be waiting in your office."

"Make yourselves at home," Jack murmured, and hurried past them down the corridor. Will, not having said a word and not breaking his silence, led Hannibal to the office. As they got close, Hannibal slowed his steps to fully appreciate the sight of Will, dressed in a long-sleeve black shirt with a subtle, dark grey floral design, and form fitting slacks, striding confidently into Jack's office.

Ground zero.

His beloved had come so far, so much further than any feeble mind in this building could even begin to fathom. It was not even the lack of flannel and fleece. It was the straighter posture, the chin higher, the eyes perceptive and discreetly judgmental as they took in the

room. It was the tilt of his head, the demure curl of his lips, it was the intelligence and deduction skills the full scope of which Will managed to hide from the rest of the world.

Except for Hannibal.

Hannibal had been aware of Will from the first moment he laid eyes on him. A crumpled, haggard man with an aversion to eye contact until he met Hannibal's eyes, and the rest was history. Hannibal had seen the potential in those guarded eyes, had recognised a kindred spirit, a predator so similar and yet so breathtakingly unique. And he had done his utmost best to unleash Will, so he could realize his potential fully.

"*Aš tave myliu*, *mylimasis**," Hannibal said simply, doing his utmost best once again. Will, in front of the evidence wall which he was inspecting, turned his head towards him and after a beat, smiled. He looked so ethereal amongst the ashes of their past, a phoenix reborn; not to burn again but to immortality.

"*Panašiai***," Will replied. He had been putting an effort into learning French ever since they moved overseas, and he had picked up a few Lithuanian words from when Hannibal used them. It never failed to amaze Hannibal that Will placed such regard to their life together and went beyond what was reasonably necessary or expected.

Hannibal took the hand Will extended to summon him closer. They stood before the board and all the visual evidence the BAU had of the yet-unidentified Randall Tier, but they only had eyes for each other. Will did not let go of his hand.

"What are you thinking?" Will asked when Hannibal remained silent. Hannibal squeezed the hand in his, the amber ring digging into his palm.

"I was thinking of your transformation," Hannibal replied honestly. "And mine."

"Yours?" Will lifted an eyebrow. "This should be interesting. Please, do tell."

"Why, from the eligible bachelor to a smitten fool, of course," Hannibal said with a subdued smile. "I believe the youth would call me a 'simp' nowadays."

Will's laughter was a thing of beauty with his head thrown backwards, drawing the eye to his neck, a few discolorations on it faintly visible and making it obvious to the perceptive eye what the two of them had gotten up to previous night.

"Please stop keeping up with teen jargon. It's unsettling. Also, you are a softie, not a simp." Will leaned in to steal a chaste kiss from him, seemingly unaware that Jack's office had glass walls. Hannibal was all too happy to oblige.

"Nevertheless, the sentiment remains," he breathed against Will's lips. "It's such a shame that we met in this specific room. I'd have liked to have met you at a more private location."

"I wonder why." At the sound of familiar footsteps nearing, Will gave Hannibal a warning look and stepped back.

“Sorry about that,” Jack said as he entered his office. Even though it was early in the morning, he looked haggard with his creased shirt and loosened tie. He closed the door behind him and came to extend a hand, first to Hannibal who was closer, then to Will. “It’s nice to see you both.”

“You too, Jack,” Will said, which Hannibal followed with, “It’s always nice to see an old friend.”

“So…” Jack looked between them, and if he was weirded out by Will meeting his gaze head on, it was lost in the awkwardness he exuded. When neither filled the silence, he cleared his throat and asked, “How’s married life treating you?”

“You mean the past three days? It’s been fine,” Will replied wryly. “Still no consensus on whether or not the honeymoon would have been better in a holiday resort or something.”

“Just between us, Jack,” Hannibal leaned in with a conspiratorial manner and with a low voice, said, “I was entirely in favour of the FBI academy.”

That had Jack laughing and lessened his awkwardness. He gestured for them to take their seats and made his way to his desk. Hannibal pointedly took the chair on the left, and let himself smile when he heard Will’s amused huff. He knew he was being sentimental, but Will had been wholly aware, when they began their relationship, that Hannibal was a fervent supporter of parallelism and symbolism. So here they were, at the exact places they had been in their first meeting, and Hannibal relished in it. He let Will ask about Bella and the work, and let their voices carry him to a past that was not so distant but felt eons ago.

This particular room in his memory palace was one of his favourites, because this was when he knew he had found his match. *My thoughts are often not tasty*. This was when he looked at a twitchy man who swore up and down that he avoided eye contact at all costs while staring into his eyes, desperately trying and failing to hide the fire that consumed him inside. *I make forts.* And Hannibal climbed over each and every one of them. Whatever the changes Jack Crawford must be thinking that he was seeing of Will, they were not even close to grazing the surface. *You won’t like me when I’m psychoanalyzed*. Hannibal was sure that he had thoroughly proven the sentiment wrong. Will was at his most fascinating when the inner workings of his psyche was stripped and exposed to Hannibal, when they came across each other in the shared rooms of their minds.

Although Hannibal was fully capable of carrying multiple trains of thought out without distraction, a subtle nudge to his knee informed him that his undivided attention would be appreciated. “We live in Paris,” Will was saying in response to Jack’s inquiry into their lives. They had decided that honesty in the matters that could be easily investigated would be to their advantage in the long run, especially should they find themselves in need of being believable in their half-told truths and outright lies. “I wanted a fresh start and Hannibal fits right in there.”

“I do appreciate the culture and the architecture,” Hannibal accepted with a nod. “And the fact that it is the City of Love. It complements my feelings to a t.” He smiled slightly at Will’s exasperated little head-shake. He *had* made a point of not promising Will that he would tone down the affectionate displays, after all. “I admit I am guilty of love. But let me

say that we all are, and that none of us should be blamed for it." Will side-eyed him with what was most likely meant to be irritation, but the curl of his lips betrayed his actual feelings on the matter.

"I wish love was the only thing to blame people for," Jack said, and it was a not at all subtle segue into the case at hand. With a deep sigh, he passed them two pathetically thin files on the murders. "I swear, these guys keep spawning out of nowhere. More violent each time, too."

Hey!

Will calmly took his phone out and spared less than a glance on the screen before muting it and putting it back in his pocket. "It's the shelter. The dogs are fine," he murmured blandly. It was obvious that he had forgotten to change the notification sound of Abigail's exclamation, but he was playing it off well enough and Jack appeared not to have recognized the voice. He ignored them and began to brief them on where they were with the case. The following half-hour was spent with a back and forth on it, Will offering some of the insights he had from last night, and Hannibal confessing to having a patient with similar identity disorder. Randall was finally named, and a quick search revealed his employment in the Museum of Natural History. He'd have liked to kept the FBI dangling for longer, but he knew that they would eventually reach Randall and should they discover his status as Hannibal's ex-patient, he would have to endure undue attention for keeping it to himself. And following the same vein, both he and Will agreed to accompany Jack to the museum to have a chat with Randall. Right as they were about to exit the office, Jack halted and went right back to his desk.

"I almost forgot," he said, bending at the waist to pick up a medium sized cardboard box from behind his desk, simply labelled *Will*. "These were in your office when you… Resigned. I held onto them for when you came back." He was speaking as though he had known Will would find his way back to Baltimore. Perhaps, in a way, he had been right.

"Oh," Will said, taking the box from him. "Thanks, I guess."

"You're welcome. Now, are you guys coming with me or are you following?"

"We'll follow." Hannibal wanted to spend as little time with Jack as possible. The same went for anyone from the BAU, as a matter of fact.

"Right," Jack agreed without objection, and together they made their way down to the parking lot. Once Jack left them to get his own car, Hannibal opened the trunk and Will put the box there. After one moment of hesitation, Hannibal opened the box. On top of stacks of scientific journals, books, and a few signature dog figurines was-

"My glasses," Will took them into his hands with an undercurrent of surprise. "I never even realized I left them there."

"You had no need for them," Hannibal murmured. He reached to gently take the glasses from Will and waited until Will understood his intentions and stood still to slide them on him. "These are not prescription, are they?"

Will shook his head. Hannibal caressed a wayward curl that had fallen over Will's forehead. "I used them to avoid, you know. The eyes."

"I had suspected," Hannibal stared at Will for a beat too long before slamming the trunk of their rental shut and going to take his place on the driver's side. "Keep them on, please."

Will laughed as he took the passenger seat. "You like me with glasses?"

"I like you always," was Hannibal's answer, and it triggered another laugh. "But if I must admit, then yes. I had been enamoured with the sight of you in them. I shall like a chance to enjoy them thoroughly."

"Doctor Lecter," Will said after a sharp inhale, a hand theatrically on his chest in mock indignation. "Did you fantasize about me, *your patient*, in such an unbecoming manner? Tell me, was I clothed or were glasses the only thing I was wearing?"

"Yes, I believe, is the answer to that," Hannibal said seriously, eyes firmly on Jack's car. He etched Will's playful huff of breath and the hand coming to rest on his knee into his memory palace, a gentle smile on his own face. "What did she text you?" He asked, careful not to use Abigail's name even in the safety of their own car, which he started when he saw Jack do the same.

"Good reminder," Will said, taking out the phone presumably to change the notification sound. "She and Lily started an Etsy shop for dad. Apparently, he's going to sell his woodwork."

"I have a feeling they will not rest until he is a household name. What's the name of the shop?"

"'The Beau," Will deadpanned. "You are right. It does sound fancy enough."

"You will be the sole heir to 'The Beau' empire." Hannibal teased.

"Not if he marries Maddie," Will replied, and shuddered. "I can see how Brian would circle over the promise of money like a vulture."

Hannibal hummed. They were stopped by a red light, and he slowed the car to a stop right behind Jack. "He might be motivated to turn the promise into a reality."

Will was silent at the implication for a few seconds. Hannibal knew Brian was very annoying for Will. If he was honest, he could say Freddie Lounds was in risk of losing her throne for the most annoying person that was ever in Will's life. And Hannibal enjoyed poking Will with scenarios of Brian's demise, measuring how far Will was willing to compromise before breaking his word that he would not kill Brian because it would upset Maddie. It had become a game of sorts for them in the short period of time they got to know the man.

"If Brian tries to kill my dad for his imaginary furniture fortune, then yes, Hannibal, then we can do it," Will said at least, similarly careful not to say anything incriminatory.

Hannibal counted this first yes as a victory, and got moving when the light turned green.

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“What a creep,” Will said, immediately upon entering the house. He had kept his comments to himself on the way back, even after they parted ways with Jack. They had nothing more substantial than a reasonable doubt on Tier, but Jack had said they would dig deeper and keep an eye on the guy regardless. “What was it he said about the skeleton? *Put them together, take them apart, put them together again*. You’ve taught him well. Confessing without confessing? Right on brand.”

“A therapist's life is equal parts counsel and curiosity. We set a patient on a path, but are left to wonder where that path takes them.” Hannibal followed Will into the bathroom and leaned on the door frame to watch him as he washed his hands and face. “You seem troubled, *mylimasis*.”

“I didn’t like the way he looked at you.” Will said as he briskly dried his face with a towel. He then put the glasses back on and avoided Hannibal’s knowing smirk. “You have that effect on your patients. They think you hung the moon and stars.”

“And what do you think?”

“I think that you look way too fucking smug,” Will pushed the towel against Hannibal’s chest. He was about to give a lecture on the merits of not goading ex-patients into outright flirtation in front of one’s husband and the head of the BAU when he caught a rustle outside the house, followed closely by a whispered curse word. “Did you hear that?”

Hannibal nodded. “There’s someone in the backyard.” The way he said it, one would think they were continuing their banter. Will decided that it was a smart thing to do in case their wellbeing depended on the element of surprise, so he carried on in a similar manner.

“Do you have anything close by?”

“I have a scalpel taped under the sink,” Hannibal whispered as he leaned in. He seemed satisfied with Will’s straight-to-the-point attitude as he rubbed his nose alongside Will’s, both showing his approval and putting on a show of unsuspecting domesticity. “And another in the console table right outside in the corridor.”

“You must show me all the scalpel stations sometime,” Will murmured as he went along. “Should we confront or wait?”

“I say we scout until we know who we are up against.” Hannibal was whispering against Will’s lips now, the sensitive skin there almost touching. “Do you have a guess?”

“I do, but god knows I don’t want to be right,” Will said, finally putting an end to the teasing by pressing a chaste kiss to Hannibal’s lips. “I’ll take the one under the sink, just in case.”

“Atta boy,” Hannibal said with a smirk, and let Will’s indignant push take him out of the bathroom. Will heard him rummage around the drawer of the console table, clearly to disguise the sleight of hand he pulled to take the scalpel into the cuff of his shirt. The man

was incredibly talented at that, and Will hoped they would not need to be thankful for the talent, at least during their stay in Baltimore.

Will listened to Hannibal stay quiet for a couple of seconds before the footsteps went to the kitchen, followed closely by the sound of the door that led to the garden opening. This did not speak of immediate danger, so hiding the knife in his cuff as well, Will made his way to Hannibal. Who was in the process of washing his hands.

“So what’s the plan?” Will asked, keeping his back to the wall and still cautious even though Hannibal appeared not to be concerned about their intruder at all.

“I’m thinking something a bit more complex than pasta this fine afternoon,” Hannibal said, straightening and making a point of taking a deep breath from his nose, like he was taking in the scents. “Pork lomo saltado, perhaps? Why don’t you slice the ginger?”

Will made conscious effort not to let his shoulders drop at that. Freddie Lounds. Freddie *fucking* Lounds was snooping around Hannibal’s house, and it was exactly what Will had dreaded. He slipped the scalpel into his pants pocket and rolled up his sleeves. “Wonderful,” he said, and pretended not to notice the shadow that fell over the doorway. She was doing a shoddy work out of sneaking up on them, braving getting closer and being caught, which meant she was particularly invested in whatever she was hoping to get here.

“And perhaps Miss Lounds would like to slice the onions?” Hannibal said clearly, before lifting his head to address the general proximity of the door. “I am quite hungry, so I would appreciate all the assistance.”

It took a few beats for Freddie to admit to herself that she was caught, and to step fully into Will’s line of sight. “Hello, Mr. Graham. Doctor Lecter,” she said. Her hair looked vibrant under the afternoon sun, and clashed horribly with the faux leather green dress she wore under her jacket. Her hand was suspiciously over her bag, which without a doubt housed an active voice recorder along with her camera. “The way you both disappeared, I was thinking I’d seen the last of you. Guess I was wrong.”

“Before we delve into the topic any further, I’m going to have to ask you to please hand over your purse.” Hannibal said as he dried his hands. “We talked about it, Miss Lounds. What you are doing is terribly rude.”

“I take great offense that you insinuate-” Freddie began, but rolled her eyes and gave her purse to Will when he silently stepped up to her and extended his hand for it. “You can’t blame me for being curious,” she said, specifically addressing Will now, her eyes wide and her stare unwavering. “You *did* pull quite the disappearing act.”

Will went through her purse and took the recorder and camera out, and the phone too for good measure. “I wonder why you were upset by that, you wanted me gone after all,” he murmured as he began to delete the voice recording. He carried on to the camera, and had to squeeze his eyes shut and grit his teeth at what he saw in there. “Really, Freddie?”

Hannibal went around the island to look at the picture over his shoulder. “I have to commend you for your stealth and dedication, Miss Lounds,” Hannibal said as he took the thing from

Will's hands and began to peruse on his own. "We did not notice you yesterday."

"You were rather busy, wouldn't you agree?" Freddie replied slyly. It grated on Will's nerves that she had the gall to collect pictures of them as they were… occupied with each other on the dining room floor. It alarmed him that neither of them were quite alert enough to notice her peering in, regardless of the severity of their distraction and both of them having their backs to her. From what little Will saw in the pictures, she must have gotten very close to the door in the dining room that opened to the garden.

"Why don't you have any security installed, Doctor Lecter?" Her wry question but a grimace on Will's face, the low ticking sound of the button as Hannibal went through the pictures likewise heightening his displeasure. "You are way too cocky."

"Apparently I am." Hannibal could not rip his eyes from the camera.

"That's it," Will took the camera from him with a burst of irritation. "I can ruin you with these."

"You can't, as a matter of fact." Freddie straightened her posture and crossed her arms. "You had no search warrant to go through my personal devices. By the time you get one, if you can get one, these will be wiped clean."

"We caught you trespassing. I can call Jack right now and have him deal with you. God knows he'd love that."

"Who is to say you did not invite me in?"

Will snorted. "It's your word against ours, Freddie."

"That is correct. But," Freddie's eyes narrowed almost imperceptibly. "I wouldn't want to get Jack involved if I were you," she said and caused the temperature to drop immediately. Will really looked at her then. Hannibal was still as a statue by his side, probably with that impartial expression that hid the gears turning in his head.

"Give me your pin number," Will said. Freddie flinched, and he realized he might not have been as successful as Hannibal when it came to disguising his feelings.

"I use fingerprint," Freddie said as she took the smallest step backwards. It might have gone unnoticed had Will been anyone but himself. He extended his hand once again, and watched her hesitate, eyes going to the block of knives on the island and back to him.

"This is a violation of my-"

"Miss Lounds."

Hannibal only uttered her name, but the stillness, the shift in the air, the primal state of alert in their silence must have done it for her. She raised her hand. Will had to give it to her that she looked quite brave, but the slight tremor in her hand gave her nerves away. He quickly placed her finger on the scanner and unlocked her phone, taking care not to touch her more than necessary.

He stopped the voice record and deleted it. The camera feed proved to be useless since she used her actual camera to take pictures. It was her e-mails that revealed the first interesting bit.

“We can come to an agreement,” Freddie said. Her eyes were on Will’s hand as he scrolled down and down and down on a very interesting conversation. Between her and a certain SBW. Will was distantly aware of his blood simultaneously freezing and boiling. He raised his head to meet Hannibal’s impartial gaze, and nodded once. Freddie continued in haste at the exchange. “You will forget all about this encounter, and in return, I will not reveal what I know.”

“Tell me exactly what you think you know,” Hannibal said, breaking his stillness to lean his elbows on the island, hands entwined. He radiated calm, but the muscles in his back were tense in anticipation. He looked eerily like a lion about to take a leap and get himself all bloody and messy in the innards of his prey. The sight was quickly associated in Will’s mind with that of Randall Tier, blood and viscera dripping from his masterfully engineered armour of predators long extinct.

“I know Abigail Hobbs is alive.” Freddie’s voice had a slight quivering quality to it, but she raised her chin high. “I know she’s changed her name, studies art in Paris, has a girlfriend, and that Will’s father is quite taken with her.” Hannibal grazed his leg against Will’s, who was still standing and staring at Freddie, her phone in his hand. “And I know you don’t want Jack to know about it.”

“Why do you think that?” Hannibal pressed. It should have been a red flag for Freddie because asking her of such information would mean they were decided on her fate. Alas, even though she was highly suspicious of Will’s mental stability and morals, she had no reason to suspect Hannibal other than his association with Will. Unfortunately for her, and fortunately for them, she did not make the connection and became emboldened enough to return to her subtly threatening ways.

“I suppose you must have good reasons to go to such lengths to keep her hidden,” she said with a smirk. “I cannot imagine she would have the means and the network to arrange herself such a sweet life, and in such close proximity to yours. Will Graham gets out of the asylum, drops everything and disappears. Hannibal Lecter, esteemed psychiatrist, does the same months later. Imagine my surprise when my source writes to me to tell all about your ventures with Abigail in Paris and your parents in New Orleans, and the next day Jack Crawford summons you, fresh out of your wedding ceremony.” She shook her head. “It does not look good, you guys. You’d have some explaining to do.”

“And what do you propose we do to avoid this?” Will asked finally. This was not the ideal situation to find themselves in. Lounds was dangerous, and he was not about to let her treat their wellbeing and happiness as a bargaining chip over their heads.

“Let’s keep this encounter between us. I erase the mails and pictures, no back up, and you get to avoid Jack’s questions.”

Hannibal stood straight, and in a performance worthy of an acting award or two, sighed the sigh of a man in distress. Even the lines around his eyes looked more pronounced as their

eyes met, and Will similarly let himself look cornered. He took off his glasses to rub at his face, and a quick glance at Freddie revealed her to be eating it all up, her confidence returning to her in spades. Good, Will thought. They needed her self-assured.

“No, don’t go to Jack,” Will said. It felt like he was overdoing the act, but it never hurt to overdo with her so he carried on. “You leave us alone and we leave you alone, Freddie.” From her point of view, letting her go with all her belongings would erase her liability from trespassing and invasion of privacy. She would continue snooping about their lives, and hold onto Abigail in case she ever needed them to do something for her.

Wind her up and watch her go, Will thought. No wonder Hannibal was so proud of him.

“Tell me one thing, and I’ll go,” Freddie said. Will could feel second-hand embarrassment on her behalf. She was always trying to figure out where others’ boundaries lied, and when she found them, at the expanse of her safety, she pushed her nose through them. Good thing she would not be able to do that for much longer.

“What is it?” Will said, disguising his irritation in apprehension.

“Why go to so much trouble for her?” Freddie asked. “What is the nature of your relationship with Abigail Hobbs?”

There it was. *Daddy first, fiancé next, all the fleeting boyfriends in between; no man ever cared for you, did they, Freddie?* These and many other words that would strike right at her core were at the tip of Will’s tongue, but he held them back.

“I felt responsible for her,” Will said instead. “She’s just a very unfortunate girl.”

“After you caused her mother’s death and killed her father, you mean?” Freddie shot back. Will nodded. “And you went along with it because you two are apparently an item now.”

Hannibal smiled. “We are more than an item, Miss Lounds. We are family.”

“And yet, according to your records, you both kept your own last names. Would it be too obvious? Are you hiding your relationship like you hid Abigail Hobbs?”

“Our names after marriage are part of public records, which means that we are not hiding anything. You were also able to find evidence of our… Relationship, via means of your own,” Hannibal gestured towards the devices on the kitchen island, and ignored Will’s irritated glare. “What we have does not conform to formalities and conventions of most kind, Miss Lounds. Names and labels can change, but the essence remains, and is beyond nominal values attributed by others. We know where we are with each other. Shouldn’t that be enough?”

“Sounds fishy,” she murmured, sceptical, but when Will pushed her phone into her hands, proceeded to delete the mails and remaining data about them from her phone. Will made sure to look attentive as she did all these with the remaining devices as well, made her show him that she was fulfilling her part of the deal, but it was another aspect of their long game. He

knew she had the backups somewhere, or else she would not have so readily offered to delete them in the first place. It was fine. They were going to take care of all of it.

When she left, he nodded at Hannibal and let him go upstairs. In the meanwhile, he locked every door on the ground floor and drew the curtains closed. When he was sure they were safely out of sight and the possibility of another trespassing (unlikely though it was at the moment,) he went to find Hannibal sitting on his bed, the burner phones they'd bought before boarding already in hand. Will took one from him. Hannibal held his wrist to get his attention.

"I'm calling him." *Tier*.

"Yes, and I'll call our guy," *Lionel*. Will was glad to find they had the same plan.

"What do we do about Miss Lounds' source?"

"SBW?" Will sneered, free hand going up to the hem of his shirt to unbutton the first few. *Sebastian Brian Williams*. What kind of a moron would use his *initials* to disguise himself? Why contact Lounds in the first place? What could possibly be the motivation behind it all? "Leave him for the moment," he didn't even have to try to keep his voice low. He was seething. "I'll think up something special for him."

Hannibal gazed at him for a moment before pulling on his hand slightly to get him to lean down, and after another heated look, kissed him. It felt profound, like sealing another deal. Will kissed him back, knowing that Hannibal could taste and see and feel all the emotions running through him at the moment. They had a daughter to protect, their peace to defend, and in order to achieve these goals, they had to do bad things. Implicit but profoundly bad things. *Doing bad things to bad people makes us feel good*, Hannibal had told him once. Will felt the anticipation build inside himself. He was on the precipice of feeling *very* good.

*

"Hey," Will said when the call was accepted.

"Hi, Will, what's up?" Abigail replied. In the background, Will could hear laughter. It was all too easy to imagine his family, Beau and Abigail and Maddie and Lily having a laid back evening in the backyard, enjoying the scent of newly blooming summer flowers Beau planted and the meal prepared by Maddie. It would be warmer there than Baltimore, too. Beau would be drinking beer (*No hard liquors for or with young ladies, Will*) while Abby and Lily worked on growing his Etsy account.

It was an easy life, theirs, after decades worth of suffering and loneliness between them. Will would die before he let it slip from his fingers because of *Sebastian Brian Williams* and *Freddie Lounds*.

"Not much," he replied. It was far from the truth. They had been in contact with Lionel on and off again for the past few hours, and had gone over their plan until they were both reasonably sure things would not go awry. He could tell Abigail all this now and have her

worry about things she could currently do nothing about, or he could keep it to himself. He chose the latter. “How are you guys?”

“We’re good,” she said. Then she lowered her voice, making Will strain to hear her. “Tonight’s the big night, you know?”

“I… don’t know.” There was no way she knew. “What big night?”

It was silent on her side for the duration of time it would take to walk away from the others. She must be going inside. “Beau’s going to ask Maddie. Tonight,” she said finally. Will, head filled with plans for murder and lies, took a double take at that.

“What’s he going to ask?” He sat up straight when he heard the high pitch of his own voice. “Abigail, is he going to-”

“Oh calm down, you buffoon.” Her smile was audible. “He’s going to ask her to move in with him, that’s all.”

“That’s worse than a proposal!” Asking her hand in marriage was one thing, asking her to live with him was another thing entirely. It was a step further, it was the wrong order to do things, it was-

“You’re one to talk,” Abigail’s words made him realize he said all those things out loud. “You guys went through so much that your marriage was kind of anticlimactic, sorry to say. Let the man live with the mother of his *grown-ass child*-”

“Give that to me,” Beau’s lowered voice sounded, and the phone changed hands. “Hi, sonny.”

Beau’s nerves travelled across miles and landed right at Will’s temple in the form of a sharp throb of headache. “Hi, dad,” Will greeted him as he rubbed at his head. “She’s going to say yes.”

“I know.” Beau’s tense tone contradicted his words.

“So calm down.”

“I am calm,” Beau huffed. Will knew, he just knew that the man was wiping his hands on his clothes, as was his wont when nervous. He wished he could be there for his dad physically, but this was the next best thing, so he put an end to the awkward silence.

“She spent a hundred times more time with you than with me, dad. She likes being around you. She’s not gonna agree to live with you because of me.”

“That’s…” Beau started, but Will ignored him.

“And if you really want her close. If you are really happy with her around,” Will held his breath in for a moment. “Then do not think twice. Do what makes you happy, dad.” Beau did not reply, and anticipating the question Beau was probably trying to will himself to ask, he said, “I’m happy when you’re happy.”

A tiny sniffle was followed by a cough. “Thank you, kiddo,” Beau’s gruff voice assured Will that the man collected himself and felt better about his intentions. “I don’t want to wait to ask her, but I still wish you and Brian were here.”

“Don’t worry about me, dad,” Will said, the mention of Brian bringing to the fore of his mind all the things that would happen tonight. He tried not to sound ominous as he added, “And certainly don’t worry about Brian.” Especially since the guy had fucked off to Pittsburgh right after they left for Baltimore.

“Right,” Beau hesitated for a second. “I’m going to ask her.”

“Don’t forget that you are a catch, dad. With the dashing looks and the growing online business, it would be silly to reject you.”

“Smartass,” Beau huffed, and with a curt goodbye, ended the call. Will let his hand fall to his lap, phone still held tight.

It was never a question of whether or not he would do shady things to protect his family. It was always a question of how far he’d go. Tonight, he was finally going to have an answer for it. He listened to the sounds of Hannibal moving around in the kitchen, preparing them a worthy dinner as if they were not playing with fire, and let it calm his nerves. And even though the sound of the burner phone ringing threatened to increase his levels of anxiety, Hannibal’s ensuing confident, calm and collected replies to Lionel kept him at relative ease.

It held him there until after dinner when Hannibal placed the last washed dish to dry. Then he grabbed him by the wrist and did not let go until he was sitting on the bed. A push had him horizontal, and a loaded look had him arrange himself on the bed into a comfortable position. Will kneeled on the bed between legs Hannibal instinctively parted for him, and ran his hands over the cloth of his trousers while gazing down at his husband, who had this tender look on his face that Will knew only very few people ever witnessed.

“Do you need to forget for a while, *mylimasis*?”

Will bit his lip, considering, before shaking his head. “No. I need to remember.” His hand travelled up Hannibal’s socked wrists to his calves to his knees to his thighs, leaving imprints of heat through the barrier between their skin. He pressed his thumbs at the place where Hannibal’s legs met his body, and grabbed his hips to keep him still. His breath shuddered on its way out. “It feels different, this time,” he murmured, unbuttoning Hannibal’s pants and pulling the zip down. Hannibal encouraged him to carry on by tilting his head and lifting his hips, so Will could take off the offending items. “This is someone we know, and although we have planned well, and have plenty of experience, we are also performing right under Jack’s nose.”

“Are you afraid we’ll be caught?” Hannibal asked. His lips were parted but otherwise, he looked as though they were having an amicable conversation about the weather, and not talking about premeditated murder. Will smiled at him and ran the tips of his fingers along the veins in Hannibal’s cock.

“I’m afraid we will be caught and we will have to kill our friends to escape.” He touched the head and watched with a detached sort of amazement when it caused Hannibal to twitch.

“Would you hesitate? If it came down to it and it was Jack, or Beverly, or Alana that you had to kill?” The question was posed nonchalantly, but the answer was significant to him.

“That’s the thing, my love.” Will licked his lips and began to stroke Hannibal slowly. “It’s not that I wouldn’t kill them. It’s that doing so would draw a lot of attention to us and prolong our escape.” He raised his eyes to Hannibal’s. “But make no mistake. There’s no earthly force to keep us apart.”

“It would take divine intervention to take us down,” Hannibal breathed, finally allowing his arousal to take over. His hips rose into Will’s loose, teasing grip, and his breathing got just a tad deeper when Will tightened his fingers.

“Look at you.” Will was momentarily distracted when Hannibal reached to take of his tie in one fluid motion and proceeded to unbutton his shirt. “Look how beautiful you are. How magnificent,” he murmured and added a twist to his upstroke. He loved to hear that make Hannibal’s breath stutter. “Just when I think we’ve touched our last milestone, another comes rushing at us. Look what you’ve brought out in me, Hannibal.” He crawled back and leaned down to breathe Hannibal’s scent into his lungs. He felt so alive, and Hannibal felt so alive as well, right with him in that moment. “Tell me what you see,” he said, repeating Hannibal’s request whenever Will was lost in his empathic reconstruction of a psyche or a crime scene.

“Extreme acts of cruelty require a high degree of empathy,” Hannibal said once he was acclimated to the feeling of Will’s mouth on him, head bobbing up and down to a rhythm that felt right only to him. “And you are cruel, *mylimasis*. You- ah,” He moaned when Will decided he wanted him to moan and buried his nose to Hannibal’s groin, feeling his cock throb in his throat. “You… You know what you want, and you know what to do to get it. How does that make you feel?”

Will came up and continued to stroke Hannibal with his hand while he caught his breath. His throat was smarting at the sudden intrusion Will had subjected it to, but he gave Hannibal a big grin at the question regardless.

“Good.” His reply was intentionally bratty to convey to Hannibal that he did not appreciate the resurgence of the psychiatrist-patient dynamic right then. That he was seen with such clarity also had not lost its novelty, and he was giddy with it. Giddiness won over brattiness when Hannibal returned his grin, his charmingly crooked teeth on full display, and he chuckled. “When’s she coming?”

Hannibal bent his head to the side to check the hour. It was quarter to eight. “She’ll have received the mail by eight. The rest depends on where she is and how fast she drives.”

“I’m sure she’ll hurry, and so should I,” Will said, and went back down. Hannibal assisted him abide by the time limit by holding onto his hair with both hands and guiding him down, down, down, and by making Will pity the masses who never got to feel the euphoria he felt at each thrust, each moan, each tug and caress and breathless sigh.

He was sure Hannibal felt the same way, especially when he pulled himself out of Will's mouth and came all over his face, covering the apparently much fantasized-about glasses with his come. He ignored Will's laughter to pull him up and lick him clean enthusiastically, working his hand into Will's pants to jerk him off with fervour.

"We adapt, we evolve, and we become, *mano meile*." Hannibal's breath was hot on his neck, his grip tight on his cock, merciless. "What will you become tonight?"

Will gasped, and used his last intelligible words to say, "Whatever it is, it's yours. It's always yours." His moan, when he came, was devoured by Hannibal's possessive kiss.

It was going to be another pledge of loyalty and devotion. Another step in their descent into shared madness. Another attempt at merging into one. And Will was ready with renewed clarity.

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After cleaning up, they took their places downstairs in the dining room. Will turned on his laptop while Hannibal sat across from him and dwelled on his tablet. They wanted to appear as domestic as possible. Just an ordinary couple catching up on the news and chatting on an ordinary evening.

"I had assumed Beau would sell furniture," Hannibal said, turning his tablet to reveal the only item in the newly created online shop. The profile picture was a simple *The Beau* written in white letters on a dark background, no doubt the work of the girls, and the banner was in a similar style, declaring the presence of "handmade wooden figurines." Sure enough, the only item listed below was of a surprisingly detailed figurine of a little boy in oversized clothes holding a fishing rod. "However, I understand. It is clear we share a muse."

"Yeah, well, not for long." Will turned his attention to his own perusal of Brian's girlfriend Jennifer's social media presence. "Dad said he's asking Maddie to move in tonight."

"She's going to say yes," Hannibal stated the obvious. Beau must be the only one unsure. "It seems that having a child precedes living together for the Graham men."

"Abigail said our marriage was anticlimactic."

Amusement passed over Hannibal's features while he scrolled down on his tablet. "You are not going to forget that, are you, *mylimasis*?"

"No, I'm not," Will said with a grin. "I'm going to tell her the same when she gets married."

"As I said, cruel."

"All in good fun."

They went back to their tasks while keeping an eye on the time.

"I hear something," Hannibal said after a few minutes. Will strained to listen but heard nothing. And yet, because Hannibal was (*most* probably) a supernatural being with all his

senses heightened to the max, and because they were both deliberately waiting for incomers, Will accepted it.

“She’s alone?”

“For now.”

A couple more minutes passed, and this time Will heard something too. “I’m sure he keeps his armour in pristine shape, but that thing must be heavy. It’s a wonder he managed to sneak up on all those people without alarming them.”

“It’s the element of surprise, my dear.” Hannibal only lifted his head when the sound of two bodies colliding and falling on his immaculately trimmed lawn reached them. “The neighbours must have heard that.”

Will got up, leaving his laptop open for the sake of the authenticity they wanted to present to the crime scene crew. He wondered if Beverly, Zeller and Price would come. “I’m going first,” he said, and without taking a weapon of some sorts, exited through the dining room door to the garden. He didn’t even have to walk around the house to the backyard; a few steps were enough for him to see that the first half of their plan was almost successful.

Under the dim light of the houses around them, Will found a beast out of nightmares kneeling over the feebly struggling body of Freddie Lounds. It was too dark to see the red of her blood, but the shine to it was unmistakeable. He took the scene in with as many details as he could, before he inevitably had to keep up the pretences. “Hey!” He yelled, and Tier, sunken deep into his animalistic persona, turned his head towards him. Only the glint of his eyes were visible under the cave-bear-skull-turned-helmet, and the gurgling last breath of Freddie Lounds was what triggered him to move. He abandoned her in favour of galloping towards Will with impressive speed, especially considering the heavy suit of armour he had donned, and Will, honed sharp for combat in all the time he spent under Hannibal’s tender loving and murderous tutorage, was ready for him. He stepped aside the last second, wanting to tire the man out, and let a few blows land and a few teeth scratch his skin. Tier, with youth and primal instinct on his side, was a tough opponent, though. Will realized that if he let this go on for long, he would be at a disadvantage.

“Jack!” He heard Hannibal’s stressed voice, calling the man in apparent panic just as they had planned. “Randall Tier, he’s at my house. Will, and Miss Lounds… Please hurry!” The curt phone call was enough to distract Tier, the young man especially sensitive to the sound of his psychiatrist, and Will took the opportunity to wrestle him down. With his steady heartbeat and an odd sense of gratitude for eliminating The Lounds Problem for them, he proceeded to give Randall Tier a worthy death; one of bare skin on bones, of strong fists breaking through skeleton and burying them deep into his face, of hands gripping and twisting, of the satisfactory sound of Tier’s neck breaking.

The whole affair was over in a matter of minutes.

“Will,” Hannibal breathed. He grabbed Will by the biceps and helped him to his feet. It was obvious that he wanted to savour the moment, but Will shook him off and nodded towards Tier.

“Go ahead.”

Hannibal took one more moment to look at him, before he dutifully crouched by Tier and checked his pulse, leaving his fingerprint and Lounds’ blood where he touched. “You’ve done a marvellous job, *mylimasis*.”

Will spat blood. His lip was burst. “It was intimate.”

“It deserved intimacy. You were Randall Tier's final enemy.” Being heard was not very likely, due to the high walls surrounding the property, and yet they kept their voices down due equally to caution and their respect for the events that just took place. Will found Hannibal looking at his body, and a quick glance down told him that he was more roughed up than he could currently feel. The t-shirt and cotton pants he had put on after shower were ripped in places, and dark spots littered all over his chest.

“Let’s go inside.” Hannibal got up and wrapped an arm around Will’s shoulders. “They should be here soon.”

“The perks of having a direct line to the head of BAU.” Will was directed back to the dining room, and he sat inspecting the wounds on his person until Hannibal came with a bowl of hot water that Will knew was infused with Epsom salts. Hannibal drew the chair next to him and first held Will’s right hand under the water. They both watched the blood from his torn knuckles dissipate.

“Is she…”

“Yes, my darling boy. He went straight for her throat. She was gone before I reached her.”

“So you stayed back to enjoy the show?” Will placed his other hand in the water when Hannibal asked for it.

“Of course I did, you were a sight to behold,” Hannibal smiled as he took Will’s hands out and gently wrapped them in a towel. “I wanted to bottle you up and drink you in whenever I wanted.”

“As if you don’t have me already,” Will teased. The rush of the fight was leaving him, and he held back a hiss when Hannibal began to rub salve into the wounds. “The easy part is over, wouldn’t you say?”

“Have a bit more faith in yourself, Will, and in everything that we are capable of.” Sirens began to sound from far, getting closer at a fast pace. Hannibal cupped Will’s face to drive his point home. “Before the sun rises, we will have absolved ourselves of a great chunk of our troubles. Now please, try your best to look traumatized.” Will immediately widened his eyes, frowned and sniffled a little. Combined with the hunched back and the slight tremor to his hands, he was playing the part perfectly. Hannibal leaned in close to be heard over the now high volume of the sirens, and said, directly into Will’s ear, “The only thing missing are your glasses.”

He then took the kick to his shin with grace and went to let the team in.

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After waving away the paramedics and tending to the rest of Will's wounds himself, Hannibal had insisted that they talk to Jack in the study, which afforded them relative silence and privacy. He also covered Will in a blanket and, god knew how and when, managed to prepare a cup of tea to put in his hands. Will had to admit that the act was going better than he could have imagined.

"Let me see if I get this straight," Jack said once Hannibal finished going over the events of the night. Hannibal and Will were sitting on the couch by the tall windows side by side, whereas Jack was in the armchair Hannibal dragged close for him. He looked grave, and could not hide his eyes straying to the hand Hannibal had on Will's thigh, right above a bloody tear. "You are saying that Tier realized he would be caught, and the next thing he thought to do was to come to your house, in this fine Baltimore neighbourhood, in full armour. Why?"

"I think he was here for Will," Hannibal said, head bowed in a show of vexation. Will raised a bandaged hand to his cheek in silent support. "Our therapy sessions took place almost a decade ago, so I assumed he'd be over his fascination with me. It was the reason I had given him a referral, after all. He focused too much on his therapist and not enough on his therapy." He shook his head and squeezed Will's thigh in apology. "I should have foreseen this. I should not have accompanied you to the museum in the first place."

"You couldn't have known," Will said silently, lifting Hannibal's chin to look into his eyes. "This is not your fault, love." Hannibal closed his eyes at the statement, but otherwise let Will run his thumb across his cheek.

Jack cleared his throat. "So you are saying Freddie Lounds was in the wrong place at the wrong time?"

Will turned his attention to Jack. "She's been snooping around the house since we arrived. She said she was curious about our abrupt departure, and our return. Speculated about our marriage, said some vile stuff," he added, mixing a lie with the truth. "I told her to leave us alone, but…" He faded off. Hannibal wrapped his arm around his shoulders to draw him closer.

Jack was examining them attentively, but his frown told them that they were doing a spectacular job of convincing him. "I have one more question, each. Hannibal, why didn't you help Will?"

"I was trying to keep Miss Lounds alive. She was still breathing when we got there," Hannibal replied matter-of-factly. "I also trust that, between the two of us, Will is more suitable to be in such an encounter. He was a trained police officer."

"You killed Tobias Budge, and he was not wearing a bone armour."

"Exactly," Hannibal agreed. "Tier was slowed down and in a simple state of mind. And Will was handling the situation admirably well. If he weren't, if I had to choose between Miss

Lounds and Will… I'm afraid we all know I'd choose Will." Will sighed, a pitiful little thing, drawing Jack's attention to himself.

"And Will," Jack looked torn between letting them recover in peace and sating his curiosity, which was a very good sign. He carried on gently. "Why did you kill him?"

"I was not going to," Will said. He sounded rough and exhausted, and made himself raise his eyes as far as Jack's nose. He was the shaken Will Graham Jack shot, he was the wrongfully imprisoned innocent man that Jack abandoned, he was the man who had to leave his life behind because he could not handle the things that happened to him due to Jack not letting him go. "I wanted to restrain him but. When Hannibal called you, when Tier heard him… He made for Hannibal and I couldn't- He was in danger and I-" Teary-eyed and shaky, he fumbled for Hannibal's hand and squeezed it tight. "I'd burn the world to the ground before I let someone take you from me," he said to Hannibal. It was the first indisputable, unadulterated truth uttered in that room that night, and Hannibal recognized it. He wrapped both arms around Will and shielded their faces from Jack's view.

"Alright, that's it," Jack slapped his knees before standing up. "Thank you, gentlemen, for your time. I will need an official statement but I'll try to postpone it until you are both feeling better. Let me know how you're doing," he said and ignored them when they thanked him. "Don't thank me yet. I don't know if I can do anything about holding Beverly off. She's definitely going to want to talk to you two as soon as she gets the chance."

Jack seemed pleased when the remark brought a smile to Will's face, however brittle it looked, and with one last nod of acknowledgement, he left the room, thoughtfully closing the door behind himself. The sounds of the CSI team working rose and fell as he did so.

"The snakes that slither by do not stand a chance against you, *mylimasis*," Hannibal whispered into his ear, so quiet that even Will had a hard time making out the words.

"Nor you," Will replied, more breath than words. He knew Hannibal's capacity for deception was phenomenal, and thought he himself was at least up to par, but tonight was a testament to just how easily it came to the both of them to look an old friend in the eye and feed him lies upon vital lies.

Randall Tier had been manipulated by Hannibal to kill Will, to free Hannibal from one relationship so he could jump into another one with a very enthusiastic Randall.

Freddie Lounds had received a mail from her trusted source SBW that Abigail Hobbs would be boarding a plane under a false name to arrive at Hannibal's place, and she wanted the visual evidence such an encounter would yield more than she feared Will and Hannibal's wrath upon her breaking her part of the deal.

All traces in both their communication and data history that could raise suspicion about Will and Hannibal (and could raise awareness of Abigail Hobbs) were deleted by Lionel, who Will felt deserved way more than what he charged and who they simply had to invite for dinner again. The pictures Freddie deleted from her devices and pretended not to have stored in the cloud were weeded out; leaving the PG-13 ones of her snooping around them intact for the

FBI to find while the NC-17 ones, on Hannibal's demand, were safely stored elsewhere for their further perusal.

For someone older than Will by a whole decade, Hannibal sure nurtured his carnal side way more generously than Will.

Jack had the killer he'd been looking for, less alive than expected, but the case was closed nonetheless. Abigail was safe, and would remain so as long as they practiced caution as usual. Neither Will nor Hannibal were under arrest or even suspicion. Last but not least, one of the two banes of their existence was being carried away on a gurney, never to poke her nose where it was not wanted ever again. Victimhood, as it had been previously proven, would keep Jack blind to things they did not want him to see, to the connections they did not want him to make. And with a little bit of work, it could also help keep Jack from ever even considering calling them in on a case.

They were free, perhaps even more free than they had been until yesterday. All in all, this was one of the most productive nights in Will's life, definitely a close second to the night of the shovel incident. So in order not to smile and break character, even in the relative privacy of the study, Will bit his lip and tasted fresh blood like ambrosia on his tongue.

He surely would not want to have an enemy such as himself. He almost felt sorry for his little brother.

*

The *traumatic* ending to the case of Randall Tier and the *tragic* loss of Freddie Lounds was marked by a lavish dinner party three days after the fact, hosted by Hannibal Lecter, esteemed psychiatrist and proud husband to Will Graham. The attendees were Jack and Bella Crawford, Beverly Katz, Brian Zeller, Jimmy Price, and Alana Bloom. Each of them had been happy to have them back, shocked at the abrupt turn of events, and glad for the opportunity to see the both of them whole and healthy.

"Welcome, dear friends," Hannibal said from his place at one head of the table. He met the eyes of each guest and Will, seated at Hannibal's insistence at the other head of the table. His equal in his rightful place for all to witness. It was another piece that fell to its place, another alignment of the universe to cater to Hannibal's whims, and it felt *just*. "It is- unfortunate, for the lack of a better word, that our reunion had to take place under the shadow of such grim events." He accepted the sympathetic nods with a tilt of his head. "However, allow me to say that I am glad that Will and I could have this opportunity to share this meal with all of you."

"We are all grateful for that," Jack said, to which Bella added, "Thank you for having us over."

"It's our pleasure," Will said, giving her a small smile. Hannibal knew, without needing to be told, that Will was particularly fond of her. Jack had filled them in on how strong she stood in the face of her illness, and how well she was doing, and Hannibal, too, appreciated her calm, serene presence. It certainly balanced out Jack's relatively more chaotic and persistent approach to things.

“Indeed it is. So please,” he said, “let us celebrate life with this meal. *Bon appétit*.” Silverware were picked up and the first bites were taken. From the moment he left Baltimore behind and hit the roads in search for Will, Hannibal missed very few things and the most prominent of which was the impressed moment of silence before his guests expressed their compliments. He savoured it like fine wine when it happened this time. The only difference was the knowing look in Will’s eyes and the loving curl of his lips as he watched Hannibal soak in all the praise.

For reasons clear to Hannibal, those reasons being that he was madly, impossibly, maddeningly in love with Will Graham, it made the moment all the more savoury.

“Okay, guys, I’m sorry,” Beverly put her knife and fork down, drawing all attention from Hannibal to herself. He, too, turned to her and took in the exasperation in her expression. “I cannot keep this in anymore. We need to address the elephant in the room.”

“You mean the centerpiece, don’t ya?” Price heartily nodded, and waved his fork at the assortment of bird bones and feathers amongst flowers right in front of him. “I mean, it’s beautiful, but-”

“She’s obviously talking about your hair,” Zeller interrupted. He eyed Price’s slicked back hair with distaste. “I mean, what did you use on it? Cow gelatin? It looks… Chunky.”

“I know you’re being mean because you are jealous of my hairline, so I’m going to let it pass. This time,” Price added, his eyes alight with mirth as Zeller was predictably provoked.

“I- you- Wait, *my* hairline is fine!” Price rolled his eyes with exaggeration, and this, as every person around the table knew, could last for hours if they let them go at it. Beverly, by far the most practiced amongst them with their antics, ignored them and carried on.

“*I mean*,” she said, looking at Hannibal at one end of the table, and at Will right next to her, smirking at Will’s caught-in-headlights look. “You got hitched, Graham? You? With Doctor Lecter?”

Alana hid her smile under her napkin, but Jack felt no reservations about chuckling. Bashful but mock-serious with his eyebrows raised in challenge, Will asked, “You think he’s out of my league, Katz?”

“No of course not.” A beat. “But also, yeah?” Even Bella could not keep her face straight now, though Hannibal had to give her credit that she was trying hard to do so. “Oh, come on, you know what I mean!” Beverly elbowed Zeller in the midsection to get him involved. “Did any of you ever think this would happen?”

“As a matter of fact, I did,” Price chimed in, looking smug. “I was rooting for them all along.”

“No you *weren’t*-” She started, but Zeller came through for his friend. “We even had a bet going on. About who would open up first. My money was on Doctor Lecter.”

“Oh yes, the bet!” Price’s cheeks looked pink in his excitement. “I thought Will would surely be the one to fess up! On that note, who *was* it-”

“I bet on you, Doctor,” Jack stage-whispered, prompting an indignant gasp from Bella.

“I thought we agreed it would be Will,” she said, looking very stern if one ignored the mischievous gleam in her eyes. “Did you go behind my back and changed your bet?”

“Oh, ha ha, I get it, I’m the butt of the joke,” Beverly said, making everyone chuckle at how relieved she looked that they were just teasing her. Hannibal watched with immense fondness as Will shared a look with Alana, laughing openly. It made Hannibal decide that he would not take offense at any words uttered at the table tonight, if it meant that Will enjoyed himself so thoroughly. “My point still stands, though. How on earth did this happen?”

“I’m kind of curious about that myself,” Alana said. “I get an e-mail from you, Will, and the next thing I know, you are gone. Months later, I talk to you about my article, Hannibal, and the next day, *you* are gone. Fast forward a year, and here you both are, happily married. I think you owe us an explanation for how this came to be.”

Will and Hannibal shared a look that communicated a lot without a single word. “Very well, then. Let me tell you something I do not think I told even you, Will.” Will raised one brow, but remained silent. All the guests, while they carried on with their appetizers, had their attention on Hannibal.

“After Will left,” he began, putting down his own silverware to get a sip from his wine. From the corner of his eye, he saw Jack fidget at the reminder of the conditions under which Will Graham departed from their lives. “I did not call him. I did not write to him either. In my ethical endeavour to respect his boundaries, I simply tried to accept that I would not be seeing him again.” He gave a pause for dramatic effect. “I did, however, keep his appointments for myself. Every Tuesday and Thursday, at 7:30 pm, long after the last of my patients had departed, I sat in my chair with a glass of whiskey *in memoriam*, stared at his chair, and listened.”

Will did appear genuinely invested in the story. Hannibal continued telling the rest while looking into his eyes, conveying his sincerity. “You sat in that chair so many times before. It held, among its molecules, the vibrations of all our conversations ever held in its presence. The grunts and poetry of our lives, it was all still there. Everything we’ve said to one another. So I listened, and I heard a melody.” He smiled. “I thought that getting the notes on a sheet music paper would give me the closure I needed. However, each time I sat down to compose, it became clearer and clearer to me that some notes simply rejected being put on paper. They evaded me like water through my fingers, and it frustrated me so. It came to such a point that most my thoughts revolved around *lacking*. Until it dawned on me,” a sigh, “that it was not the lack of notes that kept me up at night. It was your absence, *mylimasis*, that stole my sleep. My aching for you an itch under my skin that ate me alive. I was foolish to think that any sound could imitate the cadence of your voice. That any sight would nourish me like yours, that any sensation could replace having you close.”

“Ethics became aesthetics, became Kyrenaics,” Will whispered, and Hannibal blinked slowly in confirmation, pleased at Will’s quick wit and correct association.

“You were a lesson in humility, my love, but yes, also of selfishness. I realized I could never be satisfied without you by my side, and I greedily chased after my consummation.”

“That’s a very eloquent way of saying you had the hots for me,” Will quipped. Hannibal was intimately familiar with Will, and knew that his beloved was deeply affected by his words. But this was an obvious attempt to break the absolute silence of their guests, and dissipate the heavy atmosphere their impromptu display of intimacy caused. Hannibal dutifully went along with it.

“And I *did* have a composition to complete,” he said with a breathy chuckle. “I sometimes play it to you, you know.”

“Which one?” Will asked, once again focused solely on Hannibal, just the way Hannibal preferred.

“One of the many you inspired,” he replied.

“Wow,” Alana declared into the ensuing silence, her eyes wide and brows high.

“I second that,” Beverly said, similarly reverent.

“I think it’s safe to say that it is crystal clear why the two of you are together now,” Jack winked at Bella. “Reminds me of us, you know.”

“You never composed for me, though,” Bella teased, and it made the perfect segue into a more casual conversation, and into the main dish. Will and Hannibal had unanimously decided not to ask for trouble and stick to the high end butcher Hannibal frequented while he lived there. It said quite a lot of things about how Hannibal’s priorities shifted, from making a mockery of the law enforcement by befriending and feeding them the victims for whom they sought justice, to making and preserving a family of his own at the expense of refraining from such taunts.

Whipped, he added the word to the list of descriptors the youth would use for him. He was happily and wholeheartedly whipped.

Throughout dinner, they chatted about the new recruitments in the BAU, Bella’s treatment, Alana’s position as the general administrator of the BSHCI, the bureaucratic proceedings of Tier’s case and Freddie Lounds’ funeral. Everyone skirted around the matter of Will and Hannibal being attacked in this very house, and they performed their roles as victims with subtle body language. They also managed to masterfully divert detailed perusal of their lives in Paris and further exposure of their relationship dynamics, giving just enough to keep them satisfied while remaining relatively private. And although Hannibal caught Zeller and Alana stealing wistful glances at an oblivious Will, he kept this observation to himself.

After all, this magnificent man was wearing *his* ring, living and hunting and thriving with *him*, and as Hannibal had once declared as his mission, he was making it clear to the world that he was *Hannibal’s* as Hannibal was *his*. Will was smart and capable, protective and possessive, vicious and head-strong, loyal and devoted, beautiful and stubborn and wilful and

petty and so entirely Hannibal's that, dare he say, he could easily be called just as whipped as Hannibal.

*

Jack and Bella had to leave once dinner was over because Bella needed rest. The rest of the BAU team lingered for a drink in the study, mainly to draw Will to the corner and tease him mercilessly while Hannibal and Alana pretended not to hear them. They soon excused themselves and forgot to properly say goodbye, so lost in their discussions about sharing a taxi and, for an unknown reason, about the sexual prowess of the kiwi birds. As they made their way to the main road where their taxi awaited, Will and Hannibal stood by the door, Will gazing after them with soft eyes. When he caught Hannibal staring at him, he shrugged. "They're alright," he said, and went back to the study.

Alana, the last one standing, gladly accepted the offer for one more glass of wine. She was content to settle into an armchair, the alcohol and the good meal before that clearly working to make her even more friendly and forthcoming with her thoughts.

"Don't get me wrong, it really is tragic, what happened to Freddie," she said, crossing her legs. "But it is equally comical to see everyone try to pretend they are not… appreciative, of the relative… Comfort, of the fact that..."

"Spit it out already," Will murmured from his place on the couch. He had been easy on the drinks, and was in fact holding onto the same glass of whiskey that Hannibal had poured him an hour ago.

"I'm just *so glad* I won't have to see my face on that damned website anymore," Alana finally said, shoulders relaxing as though the confession had been weighing on her for some time. Hannibal remembered the moment he had yielded to her constant request for him to be her advisor, and it had been a moment much like this, when she alluded to what sharp teeth she had. "She was always pestering me about an interview with Frederick."

Ah. "How is he doing?" Hannibal asked, taking his place next to Will and placing his arm around him, watching as Alana's eyes traced the movement.

"He has his ups and downs." Will lifted his glass to take a sip, and kept his eyes studiously on the way the warm, dim lights of the room reflected on the liquid. "He had been insistent that he was innocent."

"Had been? Meaning he's not anymore?"

"He's disheartened, I suppose. Rightfully so. The evidence is indisputable, and there has been no Ripper murders since he was imprisoned." Alana shook her head. "There's also Miriam's testimony, and then there's you, Will. You are his favourite topic of discussion."

"What does he say about me?" Will asked with a grimace.

"That you are the only one who can understand him, and set him free. He writes me a request every week to call you, even though I politely decline each time."

“His lawyer tried to get me to talk to him,” Will said wryly. “I said I’d rather be gutted than talk to that obsessive, sick bastard.”

Alana was amused at the imagery. “Did you, really?”

“No, I politely declined as well,” Will returned Alana’s smile with a shaky one of his own.

“What he did to Will,” Hannibal’s voice was deep, almost guttural, as he stared at middle-distance and absentmindedly stroked Will’s arm. “Even though I know of his crimes, the thing I cannot accept is how delighted he was to be fumbling with your head like a freshman pulling at a panty girdle…” Will threw the rest of his drink back in one gulp. “And how he used his power to keep me from seeing you. I cannot forgive myself for not fighting harder for you.”

“Everyone thought I was the Ripper.” Will disentangled himself to put his glass on the table next to the couch, but reclaimed his place under Hannibal’s arm without hesitation. It was a show of solidarity. They were naturals at playing off of each other, so completely en rapport, that Alana’s whole demeanour became heavier; she was still crushed under her guilt at ever doubting Will’s innocence, and it showed. Hannibal decided to hone in on that, to further drive the point that keeping Chilton at arm’s length and in a cage within a cage was the best course of action for her to take.

“In our defence,” Hannibal said, meaning himself and Alana, “He worked very hard to blind us. If it weren’t for Miriam’s escape, he’d still be preying on you and displaying his victims left and right, with us none the wiser.”

Will shuddered and rubbed his unsteady hands on his face. “I cannot remember everything clearly. It’s all bits and pieces, but what I remember… Still wakes me up at night.” He released a shuddery breath, and rested his head on Hannibal’s shoulder, effectively making himself appear smaller. “I don’t want to talk about him anymore. Please.” he added, voice suitably thin.

This man, Hannibal thought. *This man, this man, this man*.

Alana was quick to change the topic. “I met someone,” she said. “She, uh, came for a consultation. About a troubled family member. She made her interest. In me. Very clear,” she said, and in a manner that was quite uncharacteristic of her, giggled.

“That sounds wonderful, Alana,” Will said once the novelty of Alana giggling faded somewhat. “Who is she?”

“Her name is Margot,” was her succinct answer. A bold young woman named Margot, whose proclivities were for women, and who had a ‘troubled family member.’ Hannibal marvelled at how small of a world theirs was, for yet another ex-patient of his to have ended up right within their circle of acquaintances.

“I wish you the best of luck,” he said, knowing she would need it if she ventured further with Margot Verger. It would be interesting to find how the experiences would shape Alana, and if it would sharpen her teeth. “Happiness suits you well.”

“As well as it suits you two, I hope,” she said, uncrossing her legs and leaning forward, her glass dangling from her hand. “I cannot believe how much you changed. It’s almost as if you are new people. No, not new, but lighter, surer. And much quicker to smile.” She pointed at Will’s face when he proved to be the first to crack a smile. “I think I’d like that as well.”

“One word of advice, Alana.” Hannibal was pleased with how thoroughly oblivious she’d been, how her keen perception failed to detect any of his and Will’s deceptions. It might have been interpreted as a weak survival instinct by inept psychiatrists like Chilton, but he chose to see it as survival instincts that far surpassed the average. Regardless of how close to them she was, she remained safe. Her distinct personality and decency were unthreatened, just as they preferred. “If you find yourself with an unfinished melody, do not stop fighting until you finish it.”

Alana looked deeply moved, but Will was in possession of the other half of the advice.

“Don’t force your significant other to dance to it, though. They just might feel justified in stepping on your toes if you do.”

Alana succumbed to another fit of giggles when Hannibal captured Will’s lips in a chaste but firm kiss. “I know you do that on purpose, *mylimasis*, and yet I persist. I’m more than willing to sacrifice my toes so that I get to hold you in my arms.”

And though it still felt awkward to be seen in such intimate moments, Will let himself be held close by the aforementioned arms with a contented sigh.

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The next couple of weeks, Will had to admit, were truly deserving of the name honeymoon. Since Will had not been someone who could plausibly be called social while he lived in Wolf Trap and worked for the Academy and the BAU, he had formed no strong bonds to any particular location or activity. Hannibal, however, was a different story. On most days, they left the bed whenever they could be bothered to do so, cleaned up and hit the roads. One day it was Hannibal’s favourite antique stores they visited, the other was his trusted tailors to bespeak an entire year’s worth of suits and shirts, and the other was the shopkeepers Hannibal insisted provided the best quality non-perishable goods, and the next one was god only knew what. However, Will was along for the ride and behaved well for the most part, finding his pleasure in witnessing Hannibal in his element.

Nights were reserved for attendances, meaning that Hannibal got to dress Will up and parade him through every single fancy venue he had previously frequented in the city. The opera, the art shows, the fundraisers and exhibitions; Will had become well-versed on how to operate during such occasions in Paris. Three main factors made *these* specific visits very special for Hannibal, however.

The first factor was that he got to reacquaint himself with the familiar faces who had often received and accepted invitations to his dinner parties. There was, Will could now understand, a different kind of gratification to be had in seeing these people strut around, vain as peacocks, and knowing that they had not only partaken in cannibalism but that they had

thanked Hannibal for it. Checking in on them living their lives still oblivious and mighty amused Hannibal immensely.

The second factor was that Hannibal enjoyed it a great deal when he was spotted and everyone who knew him as a confirmed eligible bachelor became flustered and excited to find that Hannibal was not only in a relationship with, but was actually married to, 'such a dashing young man, Hannibal, where have you been keeping him?' It pleased him to present his husband to his acolytes and have them gawk; some in genuine happiness for them and most in envy. Will, having accepted that he was married to a narcissist, saw no harm in letting him indulge.

The third factor had to do with a facet of Hannibal's personality that Will suspected only he got to know, and it was that the esteemed Hannibal Lecter of pristine reputation was also an aficionado for the possibly-scandalous, like dragging Will to restrooms that had lounge sets and chandeliers in them, locking the door to one of the stalls that were as squeaky clean as his kitchen counters, and getting it on with him.

"Harder," Will grunted, trying to keep quiet. One of them, at least, had to care about decency in this setting. Hannibal complied by grabbing Will's hips and pounding into him with bruising force, making the slapping sound of skin against skin echo obscenely. They had sneaked off about five minutes before the intermission, and it was only a matter of seconds before the restroom hosted more than just the two of them. "You libertine." Hannibal pressed his forehead against Will's nape, and let go of one hip to… Yes. The moan Will could not hold back was thankfully muffled by the palm covering his mouth and guiding his head to rest against Hannibal's shoulder. The pace slowed at the sound of the first person getting there, but it did not stop, and neither did it soften.

"Quiet, my love," he breathed into Will's ear, the intimacy and the danger of getting caught making up for the torture of the slow thrusts. "The intermission lasts half an hour. I know you can take it."

When Will's eyes rolled to the back of his head, he did not know if it was due to the pleasure of the act they were currently carrying out, or the promise of prolonging the pleasure for that long.

It did not matter at all in the grand scheme of things.

*

"Is that him?" was the first thing Hannibal said upon waking up mid-morning to pinging upon insistent pinging of Will's phone. Will grunted as he leaned over him and retrieved the thing from the night stand. A few squinting blinks later, he confirmed it.

"Oh yeah," he said, voice rough from sleep and well, vigorous love-making before the sleep. "It's him alright."

I know it's you.

Stop this right now!

This is illegal!

I am in contact with my legal team.

You will regret this is you don't stop it right now!!

Hannibal threw one arm over him and shifted them closer, putting his head on Will's chest to read the texts himself. "How dull," he commented.

"I know, right?" Will said, but he was smirking. This was turning out to be a really good start to the day. "What… Is… Going… On?... Calm… Down…" He read out loud as he texted back. Hannibal's laugh at that was a deep, rumbling thing that enticed Will to put the phone away and snuggle back into him.

Will had seriously considered offing Brian and being done with it, but decided that he did not want Maddie to lose a son, and Beau to see her upset. And one didn't go around killing family; not necessarily because one loved them, but because one would be a prime suspect upon investigation. And so, taking inspiration from Hannibal's mischievous side, he had Brian reported first on the grounds of noise nuisance. And then for domestic abuse. And the next day, of course, due to strong suspicion of possession, use and possible trade of hard drugs. Each occasion was marked by a police visit to his house. It was only on the morning of the fourth day, now, that they guy managed to make the connection between the false reports against him and his frankly unforgiveable tattling to Freddie Lounds about Abigail.

The man's sheer audacity to threaten Will, the arrogance, the degree to which he was just asking for more… It was exactly what Will had hoped Brian would do. So, it was with a heart that could not be described as heavy at all, that he gave the green light on the article. Right after Hannibal had his fill of Will's wrathful state of mind, of course.

What good was a honeymoon if they weren't to indulge in each other whenever the mood struck?

It took three days for the article to be published about Sebastian Brian Williams. It was a short piece published in a speculative journal about business in Pittsburgh. While sensationalist, it had a dedicated following much like *TattleCrime* (or as it had been rebranded, *RealTattleCrimeJournalism*) used to have. And much like its kin, this one had considerable hold over prospective business decision-making processes.

It did not take more than fifteen minutes for Brian, the joint owner of his and his partner Jennifer's advertisement company, to have a breakdown.

i told you to stop

wtf is wrong with you

why are you doing this to me

you are mental

Brian, honestly, I have no idea what you are talking about. I told this to you before.

Why don't you calm down and tell me what's going on?

I'LL FUCKING KILL YOU THATS WHATS GOING ON

FUCK YOU AND FUCK YOUR FAKE DAUGHTER YOU SICK FUCKS

That's so rude, Brian. I see you are under some sort of stress, so I will not take offense.

I wish you'd take a deep breath and tell me what's wrong...

Do you need help? Are you in trouble?

ILL SOHW YOU TROUBEL

So it was with an even lighter heart that Will went for the metaphorical jugular. It was the fruit of hours of labour on his part, and he was proud of himself for it especially because Brian proved himself capable of extreme secrecy when he wanted. He was even prouder of the fact that somehow, he orchestrated all these without even leaving behind a single clue that could be traced back to him. As Hannibal also remarked, he felt like an up-and-coming Lionel.

He hit sent while Hannibal was busy unbuttoning Will's vest. They had been invited to a dinner party hosted by Mrs. Komeda, who had made so many quips about her belief that Hannibal should host one of his own for her that, if they had talked about anything else throughout the evening, Will was not cognizant of it.

"What did you think about the dashing young Dr. Thompson, Will?" Hannibal took the phone from his hand and proceeded to divest Will of his clothes.

"Which one was he?" It was a chore to invest the energy to tell one smug asshole from the other, so Will did not even pretend to bother.

"The one who told me that I should let you have fun with people of your own age," Hannibal said, chin tight as he tugged Will's shirt down his arms. "He seemed to be convinced that I was holding you back, like you were my kept man."

"What- Wait, when did this happen?"

"He followed me when I excused myself before the drinks," Hannibal left Will's shirt hanging from his wrists due to the cuffs left buttoned, and reached firm fingers to his trousers.

“And what did you say?” Will asked. In ideal conditions, they would be planning for the man’s demise and which condiments to accompany the said demise, but as it were, they needed to tune down their desires for murderous rampage.

“I said if he wanted to entertain you, he was certainly welcome to try.” The rough treatment was not caused by any feeling of jealousy, Will realized. Hannibal was simply *excited*. “Tell me, how would you do it, Will?”

“I would begin with the tongue,” Will gladly humoured his murderous horny husband while freeing himself from the shirt and kicking off his trousers. Hannibal pushed him backwards onto the bed so hard that he bounced once before he could balance himself on his elbows. He scooted backwards while Hannibal crawled on top of him. “I’d cut it down the middle but tilt him forward, so he wouldn’t choke on his blood. I would then have you cut his skull open, and so we could switch the genitalia with the brains,” Will gasped when Hannibal placed a hand on his chest and began to grind down on him, uncaring for the fabric of his pants rubbing against Will. Every nerve was alive, the pain of the burn so exquisite, that it took him some time to realize he had closed his eyes. He opened them to find Hannibal’s dark, lustful stare on his.

“Such a simple design,” Hannibal said, and threw most of his weight on his next thrust.

“You could almost say,” Will put his hands behind his head, settling down to literally enjoy the ride, and gave Hannibal his best boyish grin and his worst cannibalism pun. “It’s a no-brainer.”

Hannibal growled; the aggressive action once again the expression of not anger, but of what Will liked to call Hannibal being aroused out of his mind. The sight was entrancing, so much so that it took Will a few moments to realize his phone was ringing. He hesitated when Hannibal gave him a sharp, biting kiss, and in the next second, had him lying face down, and within reach of the phone. The display of strength was another thing that could very easily short-circuit Will’s mind, but the message was clear and he had to keep his wits about him for now. He answered the phone as Hannibal bit a line down the length of his spine.

“Hello?” Will said, making his voice sound as unaffected as he could.

“Stacy dumped me,” came a soulless declaration, from none other than Brian himself. Of course it was Brian, because of course Stacy left him when Will sent the photos.

“Brian, are you alright?” he feigned concern, and ignorance. “Who is Stacy?”

“You know damn well who Stacy is,” came the same, monotone reply. Will must have really hit home with the last act. “You made the police think I was abusive and sold drugs. Because of that article in that garbage dump of a journal, I have partners withdraw from projects. And now, my girlfriend is leaving me.”

“I thought Jessica was your girlfriend,” Will tried to focus on the back and forth instead of on Hannibal’s hand holding him apart, and his lips on Will’s rim. This entire thing was truly too pleasurable for Will, on both ends.

“She *was*!” Brian finally broke out of the dull drone. “*Stacy* found out about Jessica, *Jessica* found out about her, *Stacy* turned off her phone and *Jessica* just texted that she’ll buy me out of my own company and *everything is your fault!*”

Will bit his lips; to keep back a moan or a smile, it was honestly unclear at this point. “I have no idea what it is you are accusing me of, Brian, but it sounds as though you’ve been unfaithful. However,” Will added before Brian could say anything, and tilted his hips up a bit upon Hannibal’s nonverbal request. “Even though you are blaming me for your misfortune, I’d like to help you.”

“You want to ruin me,” Brian bit back.

“Now, why would I want to do that?” Will asked. He was so glad Hannibal was going easy on him with warm sighs, teasing lips and only the hint of that wicked tongue. Otherwise, it would have been much, much harder to talk. “Can you think of *any* reason for why I could *possibly* be cross with you, Brian?”

Brian remained silent, only his angry inhales and exhales were audible.

“We are *family*, brother mine, are we not? Our mother is moving in with my father, and they deserve to be happy. They would be upset if *we* are upset.” Will shivered when Hannibal ran his nails up and down the backs of his thighs. “I am very particular about what I tell them, you know? For example, just a week ago, we attended a funeral. Maybe you’ve heard about it. A young journalist I knew when I lived around here was tragically murdered, right before my very own eyes. It was brutal, she was torn to shreds. Even though she’d been very curious about me, always was putting her nose where it was not wanted, it was *devastating*, and I didn’t tell mom and dad about it. They’d worry that I was in danger. That something *very bad* could have happened to me. Because sometimes, *Sebastian*,” Will’s tone had chilled now. Even Hannibal had eased off on his administrations to pay more attention to the call. “Sometimes, you have to *keep your mouth shut* to protect your family. God only knows what manner of *vile, unspeakable things* may happen if you go around blabbing your mouth, now, don’t you agree?”

A gulp sounded. Then came the sound of quick typing and one click. A moment passed, then another. “I am sorry,” Brian finally said, as though he could not get the words out quickly enough. There was no trace of bravado or disdain now; just pure fear and acceptance, which Will thought was apt if he was looking at the crime scene photos and those of Tier’s bone armour right then. “I won’t talk, I won’t ever do anything like that ever again. I won’t even look your way. Just please tell me you’ll stop too.”

“But how can I stop, darling Sebastian, when I have not even started? Hell, I have no idea what you are talking about at all!” Will bit his lip, and even though it had healed quite a lot since his altercation with Tier, he could still taste iron when Hannibal, convinced that the conversation turned in their favour, pressed one saliva-covered finger to the second knuckle into Will.

“I mean it. I got it. I’m sorry I wrote to the journalist. I’m never going to say one word about you to anyone. Just, please stop. I don’t want to lose my company and I love Stacy so please, *please*, stop.”

Will rose to his knees, face still firmly planted into the pillow and phone still against his ear. He was instantly rewarded for the adjustment when Hannibal pressed in a second finger along the first, and licked along the rim around them. “It sounds like you are on the right path for redemption,” Will said, eyes squeezed closed to focus. “But I wish you stopped insinuating I had anything to do with your misfortunes.”

“Right, yes, you didn’t do anything,” Brian hastened to say. “I’m so sorry.”

“Glad I could help,” Will, with one of his last coherent thoughts as his prostate was being stimulated by expert fingers, said, “Take care, *Sebastian*.” With that ominous farewell and without waiting for a response, he made sure he ended the call and threw the phone away. It fell on the thick carpet with a muffled *thunk*. “Stop that and get in me right now.”

“So bossy,” Hannibal huffed, giving Will a slap on the ass when he pushed himself back on the fingers. He cherished the groan it caused, then continued his ministrations more firmly, pressing on the little bud of nerves inside Will that had him bury his face to the pillow and bite down. “I have to say, *mylimasis*, that I had been a tad disappointed when you insisted on letting him live. I see I was wrong to assume it’d be any less effective.”

“He’s a coward.” And he was. He had tried his boundaries with Will, Hannibal and Abigail, to see how far he could bend them, for no reason other than believing himself entitled to the upper hand in all his relationships. Will could so easily imagine Brian googling their names and having a euphoric “gotcha” moment when he found Freddie’s articles, thinking he had dirt on them when he read that Abigail was assumed dead by the FBI but had all manners of fun and frolic with Beau and the rest of them. The guy was a sleazy sleuth, so arrogant he had not even bothered not to use his own fucking initials in this game he played, and he had unwittingly bit off more than he could chew, thinking he could ever be victorious over them.

Will knew that a taste of what he could do to burn that wimp’s name to the ground would be enough deterrent for a lifetime. There had been no need to make Maddie mourn for her son. But he had to admit that the idea had held quite the appeal for him, especially as he read on Lounds’ phone the conversations the two had. How derogative their words were, how high and mighty they both acted.

Now one was six feet under and the other had to go miles before he could clean his name. Will would stop so long as Brian kept his promise and behaved.

“Enough,” Will looked over his shoulder at Hannibal. His husband was captivated by the sight of his thick fingers disappearing into Will’s body, the loose hairs in front of his eyes giving the dark eyes an altogether feral look, aided strongly by the tips of his fangs visible beneath that snarling upper lip. These, and the fact that the man was still wearing his three piece, were adding another dimension to the urgency Will felt. “I’m ready,” he insisted. When Hannibal remained as he was, Will straightened a bit and reached back, unzipping Hannibal without changing their position. This act, one of desperation and agitation, worked wonders on Hannibal’s resolve, to the point that the man didn’t even reach for the lube and straight up spat on Will’s hole, rubbed his cock along to spread it on himself, and thankfully without further ado, pushed inside.

“Ahh,” Will relished the burn of not quite enough preparation and not quite enough lubrication. Hannibal was similarly entranced by the feeling, and was caught off guard when Will squeezed around him and braced himself on his elbows. “Come on, old man,” he challenged; anything at all to get Hannibal going. “Keep me entertained.”

Hannibal snapped back to himself with a drawn-out growl, and bore down on Will like a force of nature. A hand in the back of his neck pushed him down and threaded into his hair. The grip there held Will still against the brutal thrusts, but he still reached to push his hands against the headboard. It was in vain, though, before the tips of his fingers could touch the board, he was pulled up by the hair because Hannibal decided he wanted to wrap both arms around Will. “Harder,” he said, and cried out when Hannibal listened, his unrestrained moans adding fuel to the fire in Will’s untouched loins.

What fascinated Will about their dynamic is that it ranged from tender to vicious in a split second, fast enough to give anyone else whiplash, but not to each other. They were so well in tune with each other’s desires, so in synch, that every touch landed where it was wanted, every word uttered at the exact second it needed to be heard. So when Hannibal released Will’s chest and grabbed his hips in a bruising grip to drill into him, each thrust annunciated by a grunt and accompanied by the occasional spank, it was exactly what Will wanted. When Will tore himself free and wrestled Hannibal to lie on his back, when he grabbed his cock and guided it back in, when he began to ride Hannibal with an agility someone half his age would envy, those were exactly what Hannibal wanted as well. Will kept his husband down with a hand on his chest, nails digging into the soft, warm skin there, and took his pleasure. A hand left his thigh to grasp his cock, taking away what little breath Will had left. He fucked himself on Hannibal’s cock and into his tight, merciless grip at the same time. Sweat dripped from his hair at the build-up of sensation and emotion alike.

“That’s it,” Hannibal was saying, sotto voce, as he did when he was getting close. “You are doing so well, *mylimasis*. Just like that.” He used his feet on the bed to push Will forward, and without lessening the tight grip on his cock, welcomed him into a one-armed embrace, thrusting up into Will with force and increasing speed. “So good, my love, you are so good for me.”

Will felt pleasure in waves, each one more unrestrained and wrecking than the one before. When he came, he did so with his teeth revealed in a snarl against Hannibal’s pulse, one beat before Hannibal let out a shuddery breath and emptied himself into him with stuttering thrusts. He only let go of Will’s cock to bring the hand to his mouth and lick it clean. Will chuckled.

“You are insatiable, I swear,” he said from where he was lying on Hannibal’s chest, not bothering to lift off his weight because he knew Hannibal could take it, and would do so gladly.

Giving his thumb one last suck and releasing it with a loud pop, Hannibal said, “Pot to kettle,” His voice was so low and satisfied that it could be classified as a purr. “I must say that this honeymoon has proven itself to be quite fruitful.”

Will nodded weakly against Hannibal’s chest. Jack had wanted his help solving the Tier case, and solve it they had. The conclusion to his case crossed paths with their conclusion of the

Freddie problem in a proverbial two-bird-and-one-stone situation. As far as the FBI was concerned, and thanks to Lionel's fine work, Freddie had never been in contact with a SBW and Randall had never been contacted and set up by Hannibal to come and kill Will. Will had only acted in self-defence, to protect himself and his husband who was in no way trained to take on a maniac such as Tier, and Hannibal had tried his best to save Freddie and even checked to see if Tier was alive so he could help.

And from Brian, they had managed to get both an apology and a promise not to step out of the line ever again. Abigail was safe, Will's parents were happily in love, and Maddie would not have to mourn for a son for as long as that particular son of hers kept his gob shut. All in all, they could have done a lot worse.

There was one thing missing, though. One more thing that Will wanted to achieve before they went back to their lives in Paris. Something he had dreamed of years ago, and would mourn the loss of forever should it prove impossible to achieve.

"Hannibal?"

"Hmm?"

"Do you think we can sneak into your old office? I have some unfinished business with you and that damn ladder."

Hannibal's laughter shook them both. Will pressed a kiss on his husband's heart, and smiled. *Fruitful, indeed*, was his last thought before he drifted into a peaceful sleep.

End Notes

*I love you, beloved.
**Likewise.

So here it is. This series has seen me through some very challenging times. It has been my refuge. I am not going to mark it as finished, seeing as I feel I might come back to it should the inspiration strike. However, I am content with the way things ended, and would like to explore new ideas for a while. Thank you so much for coming this far with me in the Beau verse. I do so hope that it was a good ride for you guys as well <3

Edit: Changed the series status to "Complete" so that it does not appear as though the storyline has been abandoned half-way. I just noticed how it may look. This series has been so lovingly completed, with the loose ends tied to the best of my capabilities, that I would hate to make it seem otherwise. <3 <3 <3 I still reserve the right to continue it one day <3

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!